Paderewski and His Policies for the Presidency of Poland

By Elias Tobenkin

On Board S. S. Megantic, Nov. 30, 1918.—Poland and her problems are travelling across the Atlantic with me. Paderewski is on board. The great musician, whom circumstances turned diplomat, is hastening to Europe to lend what aid and counsel he can to the new Polish government which has risen from the debris of the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian débâcle.

For more than a year the famous musician has been the unofficial ambassador in America of the Poland that is to be. As soon, however, as the cables brought the news that the armistice was signed Paderewski took the first steamer to Europe, in order to be nearer the scene of action, or, as he put it, to be "nearer to Poland."

"A slow boat," Paderewski, speaking in well modulated, measured English, said ruefully. He was standing on the deck of the Megantic and scanning the horizon to the East with strained patience, much like a boy travelling home at Christmas time after a long, long absence, eager to the point of breaking.

Yes, the boat is somewhat slow; it will take us nine days to get to England. But it is open to question whether even the fastest boat would not have been a little too slow for the distinguished Polish patriot and his fiery eagerness—dreams and longings of a lifetime which events in Europe have set free.

While on his way to help build a new country out of the fragments of old dismembered Poland, Paderewski is for the time being still a man without a country. He and his little party, consisting, besides Mme. Paderewski, of his military attaché, M. Sigismund Iwanowski, and his private secretary, Edward Piotrowski, travel on special passports, issued to them by the British Ambassador at Washington and making the little party official guests of every Allied government whose soil they touch.

The Messiah of Poland

In the smoking room, in the library, M. Paderewski, whenever he comes, is always the centre of polite attention from the distinguished men on board, and there are distinguished men of all Allied nations on board—men of large affairs, military men, diplomats, scientists and scholars. Sharing with Paderewski in this attention is Poland. Everybody on board this small floating world is talking Poland and the Polish question, and Bartholomew's Atlas, in the steamer's library, is constantly in demand. Men are scanning it for such cities as Cracow and Lemberg, Memel and Kalisch.

And M. Iwanowski, who was a well known artist in New York before he put on the uniform of a Polish lieutenant as military aid to Paderewski, watches this sudden interest in Poland on the part of all on the boat and is happy. He speaks of Paderewski in a voice that combines the love of a father for a child and the reverence of a faithful pupil for his great master.

"Paderewski," Lieutenant Iwanowski has been telling me for the fourth or fifth time, as if desirous to impress that point beyond the chance of it being forgotten, "is not a politician. Politics is the kitchen where a nation's diet is prepared. Paderewski is the soul of our nation. He is the Messiah of Poland. You must grasp this distinction well. He is a spiritual leader, a great moral force. You must not measure him with the yardstick with which you measure ordinary social reformers."

These words of Lieutenant Iwanowski in a way give the cue for the study and estimate of Paderewski. I found it out when I asked him what sort of a settlement of the Polish question he looked for. He spoke in big outlines. Details did not worry him; they would take care of themselves.

"There can be but one settlement of the Polish question—a just settlement," Paderewski said, and his restless gray eyes became narrowed into a fixed, steel-like gaze. "Any but a just settlement will not be a settlement of the Polish question. And if the Polish question is not settled now and forever, the war, with its appalling sacrifices, has been in vain—a failure. A just settlement of the Polish question means a strong Poland, not a small Polish state of the Polish territory which was held by Russia prior to this war, but a Polish state embracing all Polish territory in Central Europe, a union of Russian, German and Austrian Poland. Such a state must include within its boundaries the Kingdom of Poland (in Russia), Galicia, West Prussia (Danzig), part of East Prussia (Allenstein), the province of Posen, upper Silesia, Austrian Silesia (Teschen), the Polish districts of the present government of Grodno (Bielsk, Bielostok) and Lithuania, the latter an autonomous nation within the Polish state. Such a Polish state will have a population of 40,000,000."

From Musician to Map Maker

Paderewski was carving out such a Polish state on the map of Europe which lay before us on the table. He was warming up to his subject and I swallowed all questions.

"There is no other way out," he was saying. "There can be no half-way solution of the Polish problem. It is either a strong Poland and stability in Europe or a weak Poland and the eternal festering of the old wound. For look at the map: In a strong Poland, the kind I have outlined, the kind we are asking, Poland gets a gateway to the sea. Danzig will be our seaport. The River Vistula, a Polish river, until now tributary to Germany, takes on new life. It connects directly with the Baltic. It links Poland with the world. It is the greatest stimulus to Polish commerce and industry.

"On the other hand, see what happens if, instead of a strong Poland, with an outlet to the sea, we get a weak Poland, with no direct avenue to the ocean. Poland is then once more dependent upon its two principal neighbors, Russia and Germany. Russia is torn by inner strife and civil war, and for a generation or two will itself be helpless. Poland, therefore, must turn to Germany for help. For geographical advantage is on Germany's side. She is nearer to Poland than England, nearer than is America.

"If, when peace comes, Poland emerges out of this world cataclysm a small, weak state, with no seaport, then Germany has won the war. A weak Poland means a strong Germany. It means that Germany's old diplomacy and cunning have triumphed. German diplomacy before the war with regard to Central Europe in a nutshell was this: It wanted Central Europe, from the Baltic to the Black Sea on the east and to the Adriatic Sea on the west, to be divided into small, weak states, having their own petty kings, but taking their civilization, their commerce and industry and Kultur from Germany. A weak Poland, a Poland dependent upon Germany for its approach to the sea, is a Poland controlled by Germany. A strong Poland, with Danzig as its door to the world—and Germany loses its option on Central Europe."

"What will be your immediate programme in London, Paris, or wherever you are going to establish your headquarters during the peace conference?" I asked.

"Simple," he replied. "When our party left New York we had word that a provisional Polish government had been established. The Marconi wireless on board stated the other morning that the Poles have taken Lemberg. Polish troops are opposing the Ukrainians and the Germans. All signs thus indicate that this provisional government in Poland commands the confidence of the people. We shall ask that in the first place the Allied governments recognize this Polish provisional government. Once it is recognized, the provisional government will be entitled to send delegates to the peace conference, to the peace table, where the new Poland will be carved out."

"And the step after that?" I asked.

"This takes us beyond the peace conference. We must suppose that the status of the Polish state will have been definitely decided upon internationally. The next step therefore will be purely national—the calling of a constituent assembly to adopt a constitution."

"What sort of a Poland are you looking forward to—republican or monarchical?" I asked.

Paderewski opened his eyes wide and looked at me quizzically and then came a suggestion of a twinkle.

Always a Republican

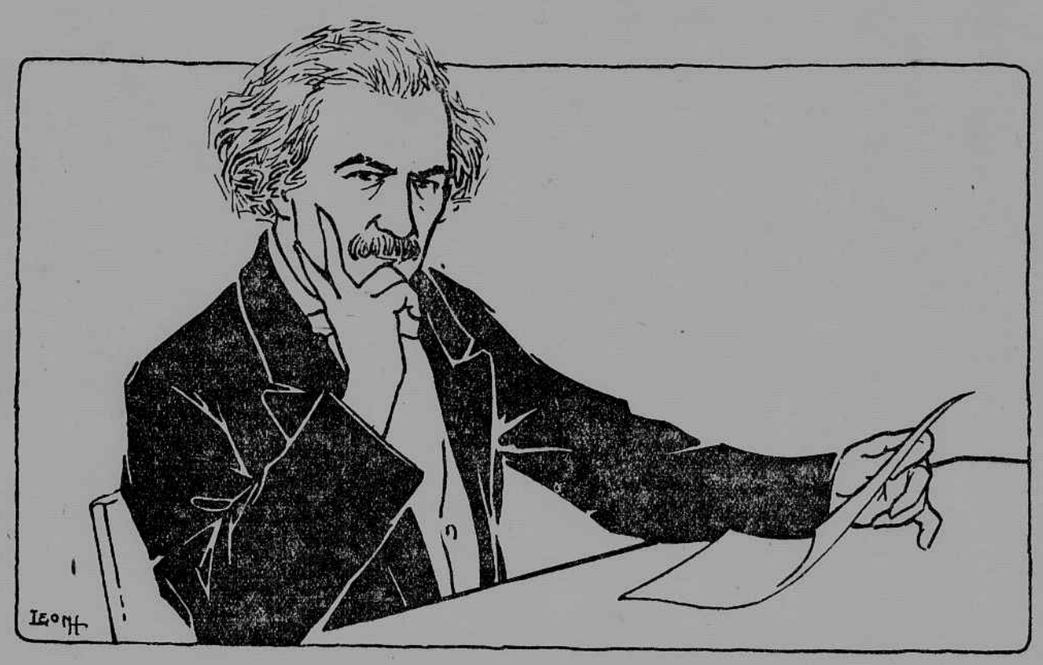
There were rumors in New York that Paderewski is a monarchist—that he is ambitious to wear a crown, to be the King of Poland. He was wondering whether my question had any reference to that rumor.

When I frankly admitted that it had the twinkle disappeared. He spoke in dead earnest.

"No," he said, "I have no ambition to be King. All this talk is absurd—it is too silly to be dignified with a serious denial. True to my country's traditions, I am a republican—always was one. I have no thought about myself in this matter. I am thinking only of Poland. I want to see Poland resurrected. I want to see her on her feet and then let her govern herself as she sees fit, as she thinks best.

"There is, however, just one word of advice on the matter of government that I can give my compatriots. This advice comes not from personal choice or predilection, for, as I told you, I am a republican. It comes solely from the careful study of the history of my country—and I have studied its history for many, many years, seeking therein the reasons for Poland's misfortunes in the past and guidance for Poland's conduct in the future.

"It is my advice that after Poland has been resurrected, has been given a new lease of life, it shall have a government similar to that of its neighboring countries. If Russia and Germany are republican, let Poland be republican. If Russia and Germany go back to monarchy, then Poland had better have a monarchy. Our trouble in the past has been that Poland was in advance of the governments of the neighboring states. For four hundred years Poland has been self-governing. A king never meant much to us; the Diet ruled, and her very progressiveness was the cause of our country's downfall. While Russia was steeped in Byzantism, Poland was following the civilization of the West. She was ahead of her neighbors in humanistic ideals. This liberalistic tendency set Russia, Germany and Austria dead against her, and ultimately broke the Polish kingdom into fragments. We want for Poland a steady, normal existence. And such an existence can be best attained by not adopting a mode of government that will be the antipodes of that of its neighbors. She must not strive to be an exception, but go with the crowd and at an equal pace."



"Have you any country in mind to model your constitution after, any one particular civilization?"

"No," replied Paderewski. "We don't have to go outside our own history to frame a constitution. The structure already exists. We have constitutional traditions. Our old Polish constitution was adopted in 1180, thirty-five years before the Magna Charta, and subsequently changed and revised in 1413, 1505, in 1791 and 1862. We shall revive these traditions and upon their foundations we shall construct an absolutely democratic constitution."

I wondered whether Paderewski was using the word democracy merely because it is current or whether he had definite convictions on the matter. I broached the subject of Polish nobility—the class to which he belongs—and its rights in this new Poland. Paderewski sensed the challenge. His reply was quick and positive.

"There will be a clean sweep of all titles under the new Polish government," he said. "We shall have no nobles, we shall have no classes. All men will be citizens of Poland, on the same basis as people are citizens of the United States. As a matter of fact Poland long ago abolished titles and nobility. We have no Polish counts or princes to-day by law. If men in Poland still either take or are given a title it is purely a matter of convention. France, too, has abolished titles, yet many Frenchmen still title themselves and are titled. Let us hope that in the new Poland this survival will finally and forever be swept out. We want every son of Poland to be a Pole, a citizen, to have an equal vote, equal rights before the law, equal opportunities."

"What will the new Poland do for its peasantry?" I asked, reducing the subject of democracy to concrete questions. "Will it leave the large estates intact and will it bring to the Polish peasant a new nationalism, a new status and dignity as a citizen without bringing him a corresponding amelioration of his economic condition? What will be the answer of the New Poland to the Polish peasant's clamor for land?"

Justice—and Land—For Everyone

"He'll get his land," Paderewski responded quickly. "I said a little while ago that it is advisable for Poland to have a government similar to that of its neighboring states. That includes not only the institution of government, but the methods of administration of law and justice, the method of instituting social and economic reforms. I am only concerned for the time being with the great general problem of seeing Poland established as an independent nation. The working out of economic programmes and reforms will follow. With Poland once assured a national existence, I trust that leaders will arise capable of the task before them.

"However the land question stands apart, it is basic and will have to be attended to from the very first. Well, I have no scruples about dividing up estates and giving land to the peasantry. First, estates that are heavily mortgaged probably will be taken. The only provision that I would make is that land be not confiscated but expropriated. The Polish landowners or nobility, so-called, have been bleeding in the last century as no other class has bled to preserve the Polish national spirit. They have been imprisoned, beheaded, hanged; their property was confiscated; their wives and children driven to poverty and starvation. I would, therefore, bespeak for these men in the new Poland not privileges, but a regard equal to that accorded to all. When necessary to take the land from the landowners I would like to see the state pay for the land. What I would like to see in Poland is justice done to all without penalizing any one group of men in the process. We do not want to establish in Poland a reverse aristocracy."

"What about the workers in the cities, the factory hands?"

"Poland is almost exclusively agricultural," was the reply, "and it is too early to speak of industrial programmes and reforms there. Except for the textile industry in such cities as Lodz our industries are yet undeveloped. Our problem in this field is rather to get foreign capital to develop industry in Poland, to establish factories, and to call into life the vast natural resources of the country. There is great opportunity in Poland for enterprise, and as far as I am concerned, I should gladly see American capital help Poland in its economic development. We certainly don't want German capital to help us in the development of our resources and in the building up of our industries."

There are about six million Jews living in the territory which, before the war, was Russian and Austrian in Poland and which Paderewski would now include in the new Poland. What would the attitude of the new Poland be to the Jews?

Paderewski was most willing to talk on these questions, not only in behalf of the Polish people, but personally, in behalf of himself. Much had been said and even written about Paderewski being unfriendly to Jews. He disavowed this with sincerity and sadness. It was painful, he said, to be misrepresented on so grave a matter.

"There is practically no Jewish question in Poland," the pianist leaned closer across the table, as if to put great weight into his words. "As for me personally, I have never looked upon the Jews of Poland as other than Poles of the Mosaic faith. For 800 years the Jews had lived in Poland. The first charter granted them was in the year 1096 in the city of Kalisch. However attached to their ancestral faith, which is the Roman Catholic religion, the Poles have been the most tolerant of all the nations of Europe. Religious freedom has always been one of the fundamentals in the Polish constitution, and the Jews of Poland have enjoyed religious freedom in Poland as they have nowhere else. Inquisition has never been put into practice in Poland even in Europe's darkest days. On the other hand, the Jews have been and to-day are among the most loyal sons of Poland.

Good-Natured Competition

"For eight centuries the Jews have formed practically the merchant class of Poland, thus forming a part of the Polish middle class. The Polish nobles were too absorbed in political struggles and in war, on the one hand, and were deterred by custom, perhaps, on the other, from engaging in commerce. The peasants were too primitive to develop a commercial or middle class of their own. The Jews filled in the gap. They are the commercial element par excellence. They had and have a definite place in Poland's social structure.

"Since early in the nineteenth century a middle class has been arising from among the Poles. There is now an ever increasing number of Polish business men. Here and there competition arises between Pole and Jew, just as competition arises between Jew and Jew in the business world or between Gentile and Gentile. I do not know of any instances where this business competition has gone over into race antagonism of its own accord.

"There never has been a pogrom in Poland. And if in isolated and rare instances something resembling a feud has arisen between Jews and Poles, such a feud was without exception incited either by Russian or German agents for some definite and sinister purpose. Thus it is known to me personally that in 1906, after the Kishinev massacre, six of the ringleaders of the pogrom in that city were dispatched by Russian officials to Warsaw, with instructions to foster an anti-Jewish agitation there. I suppose it suited the purpose of autocracy to start pogroms at the time as an antidote to the revolutionary movement.

"Well, what these hooligans could achieve in Kishinev they could not achieve in Warsaw. They were not taken seriously, even by the lowest elements. There was no pogrom at Warsaw.

"Here is another instance of how the Russian government sought to antagonize the Poles against the Jews. About two years ago on a great Polish holiday a religious procession passed through the streets of Warsaw. Church dignitaries were in the procession. Crowds mounting into tens of thousands lined the streets. Suddenly, at the height of the ceremonial, a heavily bearded 'Jew' broke through the crowd, ran up to the priest, spat at the sacrament, and with lightning rapidity began breaking through the crowd to make his getaway. Had this man succeeded in escaping I don't know but what Warsaw might that day have had a pogrom not unlike that of Kishinev, but a fortunate thing happened—fortunate for the Jews and Poles alike. Four Polish young men pounced upon the 'Jew' and prevented his escape. One of them grabbed the man by his heavy beard—and the beard remained in the boy's hand. The 'Jew' was no Jew at all. He was a Russian agent of the secret police, a member of the Black Hundred, who had resorted to such a desperate method to start a massacre of Jews."

A Plot That Failed

Paderewski paused and reflected for a moment, then he spoke again.

"Perhaps," he said, "I ought to touch upon one disagreeable matter of recent occurrence in Poland, which is often magnified into an anti-Jewish movement by those not in possession of the correct facts. In 1912 a Polish paper in Warsaw called 'Dwa Groshi' started an agitation among the Poles to boycott Jewish business men. The movement spread to a limited area, but has since collapsed. However, even at its height the so-called boycott movement was not national but political in its character, and animus and the Russian government, not the Polish nation, was responsible for it.

"After the massacre of Jews in Kishinev and other Russian cities, large numbers of Jewish refugees came to Warsaw. The Russian government, after having persecuted and murdered Jews in its own cities, now turned about. The police began to extend special favors to the Russian Jews in Poland and make political capital out of this new element in divers ways. But like all other schemes of the Russian government for sowing dissension in Poland, this one, too, failed. In any case, whatever the movement has been and however regrettable, it cannot be ascribed to any racial motive. Poland will always remain true to her character and traditions, and will treat with equal justice all her sons, without distinction of race or creed."

I reminded M. Paderewski of the frequent dispatches from Poland during the war, telling of bitter persecutions and horrible atrocities practised by the Poles upon Jews.

"Yes, I read those dispatches," the musician answered. "There certainly was a lot of suffering and cruelty perpetrated in the war zone on civilians of all classes. But that these cruelties were perpetrated by Poles upon Jews as Jews does not seem credible to me. I know the Polish population to be peaceful, neighborly. I have never seen any symptoms of brutality in it. The dispatches all come one way—from the anti-Polish side, the German side. Don't you think that a great many of these stories of cruelties on the part of the Poles may have been skilfully invented, or the cruelties actually put up by Germany for the purpose of arousing feeling against Poland in order to discredit Poland before the world? German propaganda has taken such subtle forms that when one is told that Poland, after eight centuries of peaceful, neighborly contact with its citizens of the Mosaic faith, has suddenly grown bestial and brutal toward them, one might well suspect the source whence the news comes and the motives for its persistent dissemination.

Tribute to the Polish Jew

"I have not been on the ground and therefore cannot discuss details. I can only set up more facts against these rumors. There has been a tendency in the press of America to compare Poland with Rumania in their treatment of Jews. This is a grave injustice and is either direct or indirect German propaganda. A Jew cannot buy land in Rumania. He could not buy land in Russia under the old régime. But Jews can and do buy land in Poland. In fact, some of the largest landowners in Galicia are Jews. One of the largest Jewish landowners in Galicia, Grodelzadik, owns something like 120,000 acres. Pop[illegible], of Vienna, is another of the large landowners. There are a host of others, like Lazarus, Kalischer, Lindenbaum, Rappaport, Lowenstein, who own vast estates in Poland. In the cities of Galicia Jews hold positions as mayors and judges. They are the presidents of the chambers of commerce.

"The Jews of Polish birth and origin are at one with us to-day in our demand for a strong and free Poland, as they have been always. I don't say this to please the Jews. I say this as a matter of historic truth and simple justice. My hope is that in the new Poland the Jews will be just as Polish in their language and culture—while staying true to their ancient faith—as the Jews and Poles of America are Americans."

Canada Back on the Job With a Smile

By J. Milner Dorey

CANADA is emerging from the war with remarkable rapidity and placidity. Morover, she is smiling about it. Like all other countries involved she has four problems: the returning and returned soldier, politics, labor and education. She has a definite and efficient policy for the first; the second is not nearly so complex as our; the third has only the aspect of rebuilding trade; and the fourth is so progressive and inspiring that a few years will see a new Canada.

No one is ignorant of the valiant part Canada has played in the war. She gave of her money, blood and patriotism—promptly, generously and calmly. Her troops were first to answer the call of the empire, the first to strike terror to the Hun, and the first to give example of the soldier manhood. The wave of patriotism which swept the country knew but one break—the Province of Quebec.

She is meeting her reconstruction problems with the same promptness, spirit and efficiency. The mind of the Canadian is again demonstrating its British industry and determination, and the fervor of its enterprises comes of the spirit of the French who tinge their blood. The loss of lives and the blow to their commercial and expansion hopes cry out for vengeance on the Hun. But not in any spirit of bitterness or malice. Calmly she stands four-square for complete reparation and restoration. She is opposed to any programme which would discuss future peace and meanwhile permit Germany so to affect the negotiations that in the process she will derive some benefit. Canada stands first for punishment of the guilty, and that means punishment of all concerned. She favors heavy indemnities and such trade restrictions as will keep Germany busy for years to come paying her just debts. She has no patience with her whines of hunger and poverty.

This matter of indemnity and reconstruction looms large in the future policy of Canada. Apart from wanting a square deal for all sections of the empire and for all associates in the alliance against Germany, she is going to see to it that Canada gets her share. Already the British Ministers and heads of the Dominion Cabinets have been conferring on the expenditure of the money which will be rightfully hers, on schemes for national expansion, for land development in the far West, for development of the yet untouched wealth of the country, for new fields of work for the soldier, for the encouragement of immigration, for retiring the war debt. Already steps have been taken to make the home life of the settlers of the vast western plains more comfortable and interesting, and thus promote newer settlement, with first consideration for those families whose sons made the supreme sacrifice. In short, the proposed plan of turning indemnity money to this account will make for a larger, better and even more powerful Canada in the future.

To this end the scheme of demobilization is based both on length of service and on trade necessities. Married men and those who left pivotal industries will come first. In fact, most of them are already home. Moreover, the one man business man has come first. This procedure is to stimulate business and development covering the widest areas. The question of absorption is being very carefully studied. Tabulated figures disclose the fact that the farming and industrial men who can be at once fitted into their niches are easy of treatment, leaving only about 150,000 for whom new work will have to be found. And this work is being rapidly found. For the sick and wounded, hospitals, homes and retreats are springing up. Indeed, the city of Winnipeg claims the distinction of having placed at their service the best convalescent home to be found anywhere and the first.

Politics—one scarcely hears the word. In Canada there seems to be manifest little fear of the red flag or of Socialism in general. It may be that the course of the empire has run too smoothly, that the inherent love of imperialism has allowed no free play for radicalism, and that the laboring element is too detached, scattered over the vast wastes of Canada to gain any coherency or momentum. The fact remains that Canada is attending to her political fences quite in the customary way. True, there is the squabble between the Union government and the Laurier-Liberals, the party that was opposed from the first to a union of the parties for winning the war. This fight will probably have its end in the control of the next House of Parliament. All hope centres in the victory of the Unionists, for no one in Canada believes that with the winning of the war the work is done. This element is endeavoring to keep the political issues dormant until all the soldiers are returned and at work, and until a satisfactory tariff scheme has been proposed, which up to the present has not materialized. All over Canada a strong feeling for national unity is growing for a repudiation of the Laurier element which fought the issues of the war and the means of handling it. This means that the party of Conservatism will grow in power and that the only check the Liberals will have will be the normal and necessary one of method. However, Conservatism in Canada is not by any means to be interpreted as reaction. Canada is strongly opposed to any form of governmental policy which will breed ill-will with any country, especially with the United States. Not one word of criticism seems to issue from Canada as to our part in the war. They not only have no criticism but distinctly approve of all we have done. They believe that we entered the conflict at just the right moment, and their hearts swell with pride and admiration both for the conduct of our troops and for the friendly spirit of political and industrial cooperation we have displayed. They cannot understand the political bickering exhibited here. Moreover, their habitual tendency to loyalty puts them out of patience with some elements in the American electorate.

Trade conditions in Canada offer the most hopeful outlook. Quietly but surely Canada is rebuilding her trade, while other countries are still taking stock. Everything points to a great revival of all kinds of business. Raw material is being developed, railroad extensions are being made, agents have been sent out all over by large concerns to detect new prospects—food, steel, oil, textile and manufacturing interests for all kinds of machinery, especially agricultural. Statistics are already in on money outlays, growing needs, foreign trade conditions, and the cost of upkeep, materials, and products. Price regulation has been started, wage scales planned and the whole industrial machinery is under way. Canada is looking out into the future with optimistic eyes. She has reason to do so. Before the war she began to count the cost. She has been bound too closely with the policy of England to neglect this precaution. She began long ago to figure on after-war needs, prices, employment and expansion. Once the war was over she had the underbrush cleared. Thus it is that we hear little of tariff difficulties, prices of raw material and finished product, or of labor union propaganda. Every one is settling down to the normal with little friction and with great expectation.

All these processes preclude and include an educational development on a large scale. As never before Canada is lending her mind to a great nationalization scheme of education which will sweep from coast to coast, which will amalgamate her very diverse population scattered over vast areas, and which will make Canadians with a national speech and a national esprit de corps in a newer and larger sense than could be thought possible. This is one of the growing benefits of the war upon this enormous country and people. Asking no favors, but watching like a hawk the achievements of all others, especially the United States, Canada is waking up to her great possibilities. From the Minister of Education of the Dominion, down through all the Provincial Ministers of Education, superintendents, inspectors and trustees, one hope, one idea, one challenge predominates—"a fair deal for the kids," as one virile trustee puts it. There is to be one speech, one standard goal of educational endeavor, one programme, embracing all that is best in culture and vocation. The successes of other countries are being copied; their mistakes avoided. Money will be spent. Much visiting of other schools, much inviting of other educational experts will be common. Canada is looking toward the East, her face shining with the glow of a new spiritual birth, her heart set on making her beloved land of no reproach, and much more, an example of high endeavor.